

# **Progress and stalling on the path to learning-centred schools in New Zealand**

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Cathy Wylie, New Zealand Council for Educational Research

Learning-centred schools embed adult inquiry into the effectiveness of practice and are powerful ways to improve student learning (DuFour & Fullan 2013, Little 2006, Perkins and Reese 2014, Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd 2009). They build on the traditional sharing between teachers but create a more cohesive community of practice. In an era of high expectations that schools will engage all their students and foster high levels of achievement, without additional funding, school-based approaches that enhance teaching professionalism as well as making it more effective are worth pursuing.

This paper examines the extent to which New Zealand's self-managing (autonomous) schools have been able to build such learning-centred community, and the policies that appear to have supported or stalled this development. It uses analysis from NZCER's national school surveys to show how such approaches developed markedly between 2007 and 2010 as New Zealand primary schools started work on the revised New Zealand Curriculum which emphasizes school-based curriculum and teaching as inquiry. Then progress stalled between 2010 and 2013 when attention shifted to the new and highly contested national standards, the first mandatory national assessments for New Zealand primary schools in recent years, with much reduced support for school leadership development.

The paper concludes with a discussion of policy changes in 2014, particularly 'Investing in Educational Success', which seeks a greater sharing of knowledge and responsibility for student learning across as well as within schools, and how likely they are to support the development of schools as learning-centred communities.

## **Learning-centred schools – research & policy**

Judith Warren Little (2006) provides a thoughtful discussion of learning-centred schools, and the role of professional community. She identifies five key elements from research:

- Shared values and purposes, including shared orientations to the teaching of particular subjects
- Collective focus on and responsibility for student learning, sometimes described as a "service ethic", with regard to students' learning and well-being
- Collaborative and coordinated efforts to improve student learning
- Practices supportive of teacher learning, including observation, problem-solving, mutual support, and advice giving – sometimes summed up as "deprivatized practice and reflective dialogue"
- Collective control over important decisions affecting curriculum.

(Little 2006, p. 15).

Vescio, Ross & Adams (2008) in their review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teacher learning and student achievement provide a similar picture. They emphasise (as do most writers on professional learning communities) the need

for collaborative work to focus on investigating how actual teaching is related to actual student work if such work is to increase student achievement. They also note the importance of having protocols and processes that can “open” practice in ways that encourage sharing, reflecting, and taking the risks necessary to change.” (Vescio et al, p. 84).

The development of “a community that learns how to improve student success” was identified as a key dimension in effective school leadership in the School Leadership and Student Outcomes Best Evidence Synthesis (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd 2009, p.120). Emphasised here were ‘in-depth, collaborative analysis of the relationship between how teachers teach and what students learn’, and “collective responsibility for student achievement and well-being” (Ibid, p. 120). Leadership could foster such a community by, among other things, “providing regular opportunities for discussion focused on the teaching-achievement relationship’, and ensuring ‘relevant expertise is available to increase the probability of success” (Ibid, p. 126).

Teacher collaboration and inquiry are now familiar terms in New Zealand. Indeed, new policy relies to some extent on their existence, as well as seeking to take these professional practices further. Investing in Educational Success, the government’s flagship initiative announced in January 2014 offers an additional \$359 million for schools over the next four years. Its purpose is to raise educational achievement, through new teaching and principal roles, linked to new ‘communities of schools’, which are intended to “help the profession build quality and consistency of teaching and leadership across the system.” (Ministry of Education 2014a, p.1).<sup>1</sup> The standards and criteria for appointment developed for these roles include the facilitation or use of “collaborative professional learning approaches effective in improving outcomes for student learners”. The initiative also includes a Teacher-led Innovation Fund, which funds groups of teachers to “inquire into ‘puzzles of practice’ with other teachers to find ways to help individuals/groups of students succeed”, working with academics/researchers to test their ideas, and to share what works.” (Ministry of Education 2014b.)

The emphases on inquiry and collaboration have generally been welcomed by principals and teachers, but the particular form they are to take has had a very mixed reaction. While the secondary teachers’ union has just voted favourably on the inclusion of the new roles in their collective agreement, the primary teachers have voted against them, wanting the money attached to the new roles to be spent on addressing what it sees as priorities of class size, students with special education needs, qualified teachers for early childhood education, support staff, and bilingual education for Māori and Pasifika students. Many primary teachers and principals like the idea of working with other schools in principle, but

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<sup>1</sup> I am a member of the Ministry of Education’s Advisory Group for this initiative. This group consists of sector representatives who were involved in the further development and some changes to the original outline of the policy approved by Cabinet, and academics/researchers. It has met three-weekly since July to provide feedback as the policy has been fleshed out in detail.

they see disadvantage to their own school if their principal was the lead role in a community of schools, while maintaining responsibility for their own school, and if their lead teacher was away from their own school or class as much as the role needs. After 25 years of self-managed schools, there is also resistance among principals to the idea of a lead principal in a community of schools, even though this new role has no formal authority over individual principals.

The first tranche of communities of schools is set to begin in 2015, with more than 50 expressions of interest currently with the Ministry of Education (Moir 2014). These communities are largely formed around the pathway of students, bringing together primary schools, intermediate and a secondary school these schools send students to<sup>2</sup>, with around 10 schools in a community. These are different from the clusters of schools which have been funded in the past, which have usually been of similar types of schools, such as all secondary schools. Not all the expressions of interest have the set of schools that meet the community of schools criteria. Not all these communities of schools will also have at least one principal and teacher who meet the criteria for the new roles.

Sector involvement in the development of the detail of the Investing in Educational Success initiative did see some of the money originally attached to the salaries for those in the new roles shifted into funding some time for teachers to work together, but not a substantial lift.

Teacher inquiry within a collective school culture is also strongly emphasised in the recent report of the government-appointed advisory group, largely from sector representative groups, on Ministry of Education funded professional learning and development (Professional Development Advisory Group 2014). Currently out for response, it seems likely that this emphasis will be pursued more in new funding arrangements from 2016. It will not be an entirely novel approach in quite a lot of existing professional learning, but it may move it more to the centre of what is expected of schools.

How accustomed teachers are to working together to improve student achievement in their own schools will also affect in-school capability to address a community of school's achievement challenge, and the extent of cross-school collaboration which is a core component of Investing in Educational Success.

The purpose of this paper is to provide some food for thought about the ambitions of and support needed for these related new approaches, by looking at the current levels of professional collaboration in primary schools.

So the questions I ask in this paper include: what is the reality of professional collaboration in New Zealand primary schools? How far does it go beyond traditional sharing? How big a shift in existing school ways of doing things would it take to reach a level where we could

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the emphasis on family choice of school, New Zealand does not have a clear set of designated 'feeder' schools for each secondary school. Thus students from primary schools in a given geographic area may go on to a number of different schools.

say that effective communities of practice described in the literature have become the norm? Where are New Zealand schools positioned now in the ways teachers work together, and learn from everyday organisational processes? What role does national policy play in orienting and supporting school leadership to focus on cultivating schools that operate as professional communities focused on student learning?

## **Progress in collective working: 2007 to 2010**

For some time now, the NZCER 3-yearly national surveys of schools<sup>3</sup> have been tracking some of the ways in which teachers work and learn together, and how everyday processes are used to discuss student performance, and emphasise a collective responsibility for student learning. In 2011 comparison of primary teachers' responses in 2007 and 2010 to items asking about these showed some marked increases in reports of collective practices and processes related to student achievement (Wylie 2011a). Along with these increases in the ways primary teachers were working more together around improving student performance came increases in reporting increases in student achievement as one of teachers' main achievements in their work, and higher morale and job satisfaction.

These increases in collective work around student achievement are consistent with national policy changes during that time. The forward looking New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) was released in draft form in 2007, with time for schools to work on it, ready for implementation from 2010. The careful development work on this, including teacher and school leader feedback over several iterations, gave teachers and school leaders a sense of 'ownership' of the NZC. NZC provides a framework which schools use to map out their own school-based curriculum. This means schools needed to discuss and develop their own values, goals and emphases. It fostered more collaborative work in many schools – albeit of varying depth and coherence. There is also a strong emphasis on teacher and student inquiry in the NZC. Principals and teachers generally relished the NZC, and felt respected by it.

Supporting more confidence in teacher and student inquiry, albeit unevenly across primary schools, were participation in national professional development programmes, such as the Literacy Professional Development programme, which brought facilitators into schools to work with teachers on using assessment results as the focus for inquiry and trying out new practices. The rapid growth of a new generation of assessments that provided quick

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<sup>3</sup> NZCER began its national surveys of a representative sample of primary schools in 1989, when New Zealand shifted to self-managing schools, to provide information about the impact of policy change. National secondary school surveys were added in 2003; all secondary schools are surveyed. Each schooling level is surveyed every 3 years, with questionnaires for principals, teachers, school board trustees, and parents at a cross-section of schools. Reports and papers using national survey data can be found at <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/national-survey>.

feedback to teachers about student understanding, with links to 'where next' ideas also supported teacher inquiry and work together.

This NZC work may have also spurred changes in how schools used non-contact time. Teachers had won an entitlement to classroom release time in their collective contracts from 2004. This is not a large entitlement: it amounts to an hour a week or two days a term. (Nothing like the collaboration time reported in a recent blog for some Shanghai teachers, of 7.5 hours a week, and teaching for 15 hours; or some Singaporean teachers (18 hours teaching a week and 15 hours collaborating; or even Toronto: 4 hours a week collaboration and 25 hours teaching; Johnson 2014). However, the proportion of primary teachers who said they had enough time to plan and discuss their work together doubled from 28 percent in 2007 to 61 percent in 2010, indicating that school leaders were paying more attention to collaborative work in timetabling and allocation.

More national level attention was paid to supporting school leadership over this period, using the Leadership and Student Outcomes Best Evidence Synthesis and the Kiwi Leadership for Principals Framework to get a sharper focus on what made leadership effective – including the development of the communities mentioned above. So there was much more of a well-informed and challenging focus on school leadership at both the national level, evidenced in more professional learning and development availability, and in principals' groups (Wylie 2011b). Interestingly, the proportion of primary teachers who identified "more appreciation of my work by school leaders" as something they would change about their work halved from 43 percent in 2007 to 20 percent in 2010. (This item was not included in the 2006 secondary national survey; in 2009 33 percent of secondary teachers said they would like more appreciation of their work by school leaders.)

Those who identified their principal's leadership as an issue facing their school declined from 20 percent in 2007 to 12 percent in 2010 in primary schools, and from 27 percent in 2006 for secondary teachers to 21 percent in 2009 for secondary teachers.

## **2010-2013: a different story**

What further progress has been made since 2010, in a rather different policy environment? This policy environment lowered morale for primary and secondary teachers and principals, with both school sectors feeling less respected as professionals and experiencing more intensification of their work (Wylie 2013; Wylie & Bonne 2014). Most cluster-based funding for schools to work together came to an end. Ministry-funded professional learning and development switched from ongoing funding of school support services in the universities, to contestable contracts, with allocation decisions made by local Ministry of Education offices, using national priorities. This led to patchy support for schools. A new professional development programme, using evidence about the school's leadership to provide focus for inquiry and work focused on the principal's own school came to an end. The national

leadership strategy faded into the background. In 2010 77 percent of primary principals thought they got enough support to do their job effectively; in 2013 this had reduced to 64 percent.

Most of the policy oxygen and primary school energy and attention were consumed by the introduction of National Standards, a watershed change for New Zealand primary schools (Thrupp 2013, Wylie 2012, pp. 201-207, Wylie & Berg 2013). The National-led government elected in late 2008 had included mandatory national assessments for Year 1-8 students in its policy, and implemented this radical change for New Zealand education very quickly, in the face of strenuous opposition from the sector and cautions from assessment experts. From 2010, teachers were required to make an 'overall teacher judgement' on every child, rating them above, at or below curriculum-linked National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics, for every year level (or time since starting school for students in the first three years of school). The speed with which the standards were developed and reporting required was accompanied by minimal professional development (often led by advisers who themselves were coming to grips with the nature of the standards). Moderation of teacher judgements – which provides good opportunities for productive teacher collaboration (Hipkins & Robertson 2011) – was emphasised, but left up to individual schools, and no systematic support given for schools to work together to both come to grips with the new standards and moderate judgements across schools, as the teacher union, NZEI, had urged. In 2013, most primary principals and teachers thought the use of the National Standards had made little difference to student achievement. However, teachers were positive about the moderation work they did with their colleagues: 70 percent said it gave them useful insights for their practice (Wylie & Berg, 2013).

So: marked changes in the policy environment and support for professional development and learning occurred between 2010 and 2013. Are these reflected in what happened in teachers' everyday experiences of working together over the period?

I look first at the overall picture in 2013 of teachers' work and learning together, and how different facets of this work relate to each other. I then describe changes between 2010 and 2013 in teachers' responses on the national survey.<sup>4</sup>

## **The overall picture in 2013**

The overall picture<sup>5</sup> given here focuses on factors identified by principal component analysis with varimax rotation, using SAS<sup>6</sup>, from several banks of likert-scaled items that

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<sup>4</sup> The NZCER national surveys provide a picture of change at an aggregate rather than individual teacher level: we do not follow the same sample of teachers over time. Representativeness of the responses is comparable across the years in terms of prime school characteristics such as school socio-economic decile (each school is assigned to a decile for funding purposes, based on their comparative share of the most disadvantaged students, using census data).

asked teachers to rate their experience of school processes, their professional learning and development, and their school's ways of working. The relationships between these factors were explored through correlations, and by using individual teacher's averaged responses across the individual items in each factor to divide them into levels of experience: whether they reported something happening generally or at a very good level; at a good level; at a satisfactory level; or a poor or very poor level, and then compare levels of responses across other items we asked about, such as the school's work on the NZC, the kinds of challenges faced by the teacher's school, and teacher morale levels.

## Primary teachers' reports of their work and learning together in 2013

The five factors relating to everyday practices consist of:

**Teacher Sharing:** sharing of knowledge about individual students, teaching ideas, assessment resources, teaching resources and lessons and planning (alpha of 0.93)<sup>7</sup>

**Improvement Focus in Work Together:** analysis of student achievement data to improve teaching and learning; analysis of student attendance, behaviour and wellbeing data to improve teaching and learning, setting useful targets for student achievement, sharing ideas for how to help students improve their performance, support for taking risks in teaching, and developing teachers' leadership skills (alpha of 0.91)

**Timely Support:** for a problem in teaching, or with student behaviour (alpha of 0.91)

**Coherence in School Professional Culture:** Sufficient time to work together; teachers can discuss any teaching problem with a more knowledgeable colleague; syndicate/faculty meetings are often used to discuss student achievement and strategies to improve it where needed; staff have good processes for making group decisions and/or solving problems; teachers new to the school are guided into the practices teachers have found effective for the school's students; the school goals really do guide day-to-day work; school has a real focus on ongoing learning of teachers as adult professionals and school retains good teachers (alpha of 0.84)

**Useful Feedback:** teacher can get useful feedback on student engagement in their class by inviting a colleague to observe; can get useful feedback on their teaching by inviting a colleague to observe; can get useful feedback from principal/senior school leadership through their observations of teacher's class; has regular meetings with the principal or member of school's leadership team about their work that support their work or give them

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<sup>5</sup> The primary data is reported fully in Wylie & Bonne 2014. Secondary data is covered in Wylie 2013.

<sup>6</sup> My thanks to Melanie Berg and Rachel Dingle, NZCER statisticians, who undertook the analyses I use in this paper.

<sup>7</sup> The alpha level indicates the consistency of individual responses across the items in the factor. An alpha of 1 is the highest level.

new insights (10 percent strongly agree, 40 percent agree: together = 50 percent) (alpha of 0.80)

Table 1 gives the big picture of teachers' reports of the quality or habitual nature of the practices included in these factors. The big picture shows that most of these practices are not yet at the 'very good' or 'generally happens' level.

Sharing between teachers was the most common way in which teachers worked collegially, and this was at a very good level or usual practice for just under half the country's primary teachers. A substantial minority of teachers were working in schools where they did not rate as good or very good the feedback they could get on their work, the coherence in what the school was focusing on, whether there was an improvement focus in their work together, and the timeliness of support.

Table 1 **Primary teachers' reports of professional collegiality and learning-focused school processes**

2013 national survey (N=713)	Teacher sharing %	Timely support %	Improvement focus in work together %	Coherence in school professional culture %	Useful feedback %
Very good/generally happens	46	39	28	11	10
Good	38	38	47	58	48
Satisfactory	12	17	20	26	33
Poor	3	4	4	3	6
Very poor/non-existent	0.4	0.6	0.1	0.6	1

NB: Numbers do not add to 100 because of rounding, and a few who did not answer these questions

How are these collegial practices related to teachers' reports of their professional learning development over the previous two to three years, and their workload? We identified four factors among the bank of items we asked about professional learning:

**Good Opportunities for Teacher Learning:** school leaders ensure teachers have useful blocks of time for professional learning; good opportunities exist to explore deeper ideas and theory that underpin new approaches, good opportunities exist to see and discuss the work of teachers in the same school when a teacher wants to do things differently; new ideas are hard to put into practice in the school [reverse scored]; sharing ideas with colleagues is the best part of structured professional learning/development; school leaders model inspiring professional learning (alpha =0.80)

**More Inquiry:** teachers in the school evaluate the effectiveness of their work; use their analysis of student data to assist them to improve their practice; use teaching as inquiry and

action research approaches to improve their practice; seek student feedback about their practice, much more (alpha = 0.71)

**Practical Help to engage priority learners and work with parents:**<sup>8</sup> teacher's professional learning has provided practical help to engage Māori students; Pacific students; students with special educational needs; build positive relations with parents and whānau (alpha = 0.82)

**Good Access to External Advice:** good opportunities to see and discuss the work of teachers in other schools whose work interests the teacher; easy access to helpful specialist advice outside the school when needed; easy access to a helpful network of teachers interested in similar things as the teacher; TKI [the Ministry of Education's website for resources] is a useful source of support and links to the information the teacher needs; teacher would like more customised advice and support from outside their school [reverse scored] (alpha = 0.67).

The **Workload** factor consisted of three items: whether the workload was fair; whether it was manageable; and whether the level of work-related stress in the job was manageable (alpha = 0.87).

Few teachers *strongly* agreed that they had good opportunities for professional learning, had undertaken more inquiry into their practice, that they had good access to external advice, that they had gained practical help to engage priority learners from their professional learning – or had a manageable workload.

Substantial minorities of teachers did not experience the kinds of opportunities to learn from each other that a learning-centred school needs to build into its work. Many also lacked the external support to keep developing practice that schools need – learning-centred or not. Just under half were also grappling with how to manage their workload, suggesting that any new practice that looks like an addition on top of existing practices rather than a change in how things can be done that improves capacity to do them, will be greeted with suspicion.

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<sup>8</sup> The three groups of students have been identified by the Ministry of Education as priority learners: those whose engagement in learning and achievement success needs improvement. Parents are increasingly emphasised in policy as influential in student engagement and motivation for learning, with schools expected to improve their communication with parents in a two-way sharing of information so that there can be effective home-school partnerships around each student.

Table 2 Primary teachers' views of professional learning and workload

	Good opportunities %	More Inquiry %	Good access to external advice %	Practical help to engage priority learners & parents %	Workload manageability %
2013 national survey (N=713)					
Strongly agree	7	5	1	2	4
Agree	57	48	25	26	49
Neutral/not sure	31	38	55	50	n/a
Disagree	4	8	17	18	40
Strongly disagree	0.3	0.3	1	3	6

NB: Numbers do not add to 100 because of rounding, and a few who did not answer these questions. Scale used for workload manageability has four levels.

## How are ways of working and learning together related?

Little (1990) made an early distinction between teacher collegiality at the level of sharing, and the more demanding (and rewarding) forms of joint teacher work described at the beginning of this paper. Correlations between the Teacher Sharing factor and the other factors in Tables 1 and 2 were strongest with the school having an Improvement Focus in Teachers' Work Together ( $r = 0.71$ ) and providing Timely Support for teachers experiencing a problem ( $r = 0.63$ ). Teacher Sharing was moderately correlated with getting Useful Feedback ( $r = 0.53$ ), and having Coherence in the School's Professional Culture ( $r = 0.42$ ). It was not well correlated with having Good Opportunities for Professional Learning ( $r = 0.29$ ), or with teachers noting More Use of Inquiry ( $r = 0.34$ ). Sharing between teachers seems to provide reasonable ground to work from, but on its own insufficient for the kind of collective approach that is called for in the new professional learning and development and Investing in Educational Success policies. Nor will it provide teachers with practical help to engage priority learners ( $r = 0.18$ ), or good access to external advice ( $r = 0.29$ ).

Highest correlation levels ( $r = 0.57$  to  $r = 0.77$ ) were found between having an Improvement Focus in Teachers' Work Together, Coherence in the school's Professional Culture, Good Opportunities to Learn from others, and Timely Support. Teachers in schools that were

deliberately supporting deprivatised practice through ensuring they had time to work together and problem-solve at individual and collective levels also paid attention to their opportunities to learn from others, and to try out new ideas: and the converse was also true. Teachers in such schools also had more practical help to engage priority learners from their professional learning and development (around the  $r = 0.40$  mark), and more good access to external advice (between  $r = 0.48$  to  $r = 0.57$ ).

They were also more likely to be in schools that had effective approaches to student behaviour that were consistent, and in which teachers had been well-involved in developing (correlations between  $r = 0.51$  and  $0.56$ ).

Having a manageable workload was not strongly correlated with any of these factors: but the highest correlations were with the Coherence in the school's Professional Culture ( $r = 0.45$ ), an Improvement Focus in Teachers' Work Together ( $r = 0.39$ ), and having Good Opportunities to Learn from others ( $r = 0.38$ ). These correlations suggest a virtuous spiral of using teacher time well, building knowledge through work together and providing coherence rather than fragmentation in school processes.

## **Virtuous spirals – for a minority**

What else distinguished schools where these aspects of collective work and learning were coming together? When we categorised teachers by the level of their responses making up each of the factors described above and then cross-tabulated these with other key questions in the national survey, we found in general teachers in the highest level of these factors were more often

- in schools where “NZC drives what we do”
- involved in professional learning and change in practice with a focus on aspects of the NZC other than literacy and numeracy (used in the National Standards). The foci for professional learning or change in teaching practice in their schools in the past two years were more likely to include the key competencies, learning to learn, formative assessment, future-focused learning, and the integration of curriculum areas: all aspects that are consistent with an emphasis on inquiry. Those who were at a high level on the Coherence in the school's Professional Culture factor were also more likely to report values and learning activities that enable students to research and contribute to school/community change among their school's foci for professional learning or change in teaching practice over the past two years.
- noting among their own achievements of the past three years the use of new pedagogical approaches, improved student assessment for learning, and taking an active role in more collective ways of working in their school;

and less often identifying these challenges facing their school:

- student achievement and student behaviour
- the quality of teaching
- attracting and retaining good teachers
- a declining school roll
- insufficient support for professional learning
- providing a balanced curriculum
- some staff resistant to change, and
- their principal's leadership (a challenge for 4 percent of teachers in the highest level for the factor Improvement Focus in Work Together', compared with 25 percent of those in the middle level for this factor, and 62 percent at the lowest level).

Morale was also higher for teachers who were in the top level for these factors.

These associations point to virtuous spirals of collective work related to student learning, that respect teachers, provide the conditions they need to do this work, and enable them to change practice. The NZC provides an encouraging – and inspiring - framework for the development of this sense of a school as a community of practice. These teachers were in schools that had been able to maintain their focus on the NZC, incorporating the new National Standards work rather than allowing the National Standards to dominate. They were also in schools that had good leadership.

## **Challenges for policy**

A challenge for the new policy is that these teachers were in the minority. Table 1 showed that 28 percent of teachers were in the highest level for the Improvement Focus in Work Together factor, and 11 percent in the highest level for the Coherence in School Professional Culture factor; Table 2 showed that 7 percent were in the highest level for having Good Opportunities to Learn from Others factor. Note also that teachers' individual experience – and therefore capability to work more communally – is not something inherent to them as individuals, but is dependent on the schools they work in. It is not just a question of identifying 'good' teachers, but of addressing school cultures as a whole.

On the one hand, it is encouraging to see policy emphasise more collective work, and inquiry. On the other hand, the base to develop this further needs considerable strengthening over the next few years before it can bear the weight expected of it to make substantial differences to student achievement. Communities of schools and those who will play key roles in their effectiveness, in the development of professional learning communities within and across schools, will need to be part of wider learning communities themselves, and able to easily share and access relevant knowledge and expertise for their

challenges. It will be important to provide an infrastructure of this kind that also positions primary teachers and principals in a new relationship with the Ministry of Education.

More collective work and inquiry in schools will need strengthening in its own right. And it will also need to be buttressed by what happens in other policy affecting schools and teachers' scope for collective work and inquiry. The importance of having synergistic policy and support is brought home by comparing the rapid development of the ways that primary schools work as professional communities between 2007 and 2010 with the stalling of what seemed like good momentum, in 2010 and 2013. National Standards should in principle have made some aspects of teachers' work focused on student achievement more customary in schools, but in principle is not enough: developing schools as sustainable professional communities requires more coherence and deliberate focus at the national as well as individual school level.

Below are the trends for the proportions of teachers reporting that practices are very good/happen generally in their school. These show this pattern of marked progress between 2007 to 2010, followed by stalling between 2010 and 2013.

- Analysis of student achievement to guide teaching and learning
  - **41% in 2013**, 44% in 2010, 18% in 2007
- Setting useful targets for student achievement
  - **37% in 2013**, 41% in 2010, 19% in 2007
- Support for risk taking and innovation in teaching
  - **34% in 2013**, 41% in 2010, 18% in 2007
- Timely support for problems in teaching
  - **42% in 2013**, 40% in 2010, 20% in 2007
- Sharing ideas to improve student performance
  - **38% in 2013**, 37% in 2010, 14% in 2007
- Good processes for group decisions and problem solving
  - **17% in 2013**, 19% in 2010, 8% in 2007
- Developing leadership skills among teachers
  - **29% in 2013**, 32% in 2010, 10% in 2007

at the agree level:

- Enough time to work together to plan teaching and discuss student work
  - **57% in 2013**, 61% in 2010, 28% in 2007.

There was a decline in the proportion at the very good/usually happens level for this practice:

- Good opportunities to observe effective colleagues
  - **45% 2013**, 58% in 2010 (not asked in 2007).

Only a couple of items showed some increases from 2010: in the sharing of teaching resources (from 43 percent in 2010 to 50 percent saying that this was very good or generally happened), and in the sharing of lessons and planning (from 36 percent in 2010 to 44 percent in 2013 saying this was good or generally happened).

As well as this stalling in what seemed to be progress in the capacity of New Zealand primary schools to work as professional learning communities, the national surveys show stalling in the kinds of learning opportunities students have related to aspects of the NZC, and in the more collaborative and 'future-oriented' use of ICT and E-learning. The proportion of teachers identifying their principal's leadership as a major challenge for their school also remained static, at 12 percent.

It would be a mistake if Investing in Educational Success were to consume all the policy oxygen in the next few years. It will not bear the expected fruit unless it is supported by attention to curriculum, assessment, and school leadership. Work that has recently been done to provide teachers with more resources to support their NZC work (such as on the Key Competencies), needs to be extended and systematically used with PLD providers and communities of schools. E-Learning similarly needs a more systematic approach if teachers and students are to make deeper use of computers and the Internet. A systematic approach to the development of school leadership needs to be resumed. The recommendations of the Ministry of Education's National Standards Aggregate Results Advisory Group, made in 2013, need to be acted on, not only for their own merit, but to help restore primary teachers and principals' trust in a national system, that shows it is itself open to the inquiry and collaborative work it is asking of schools.

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